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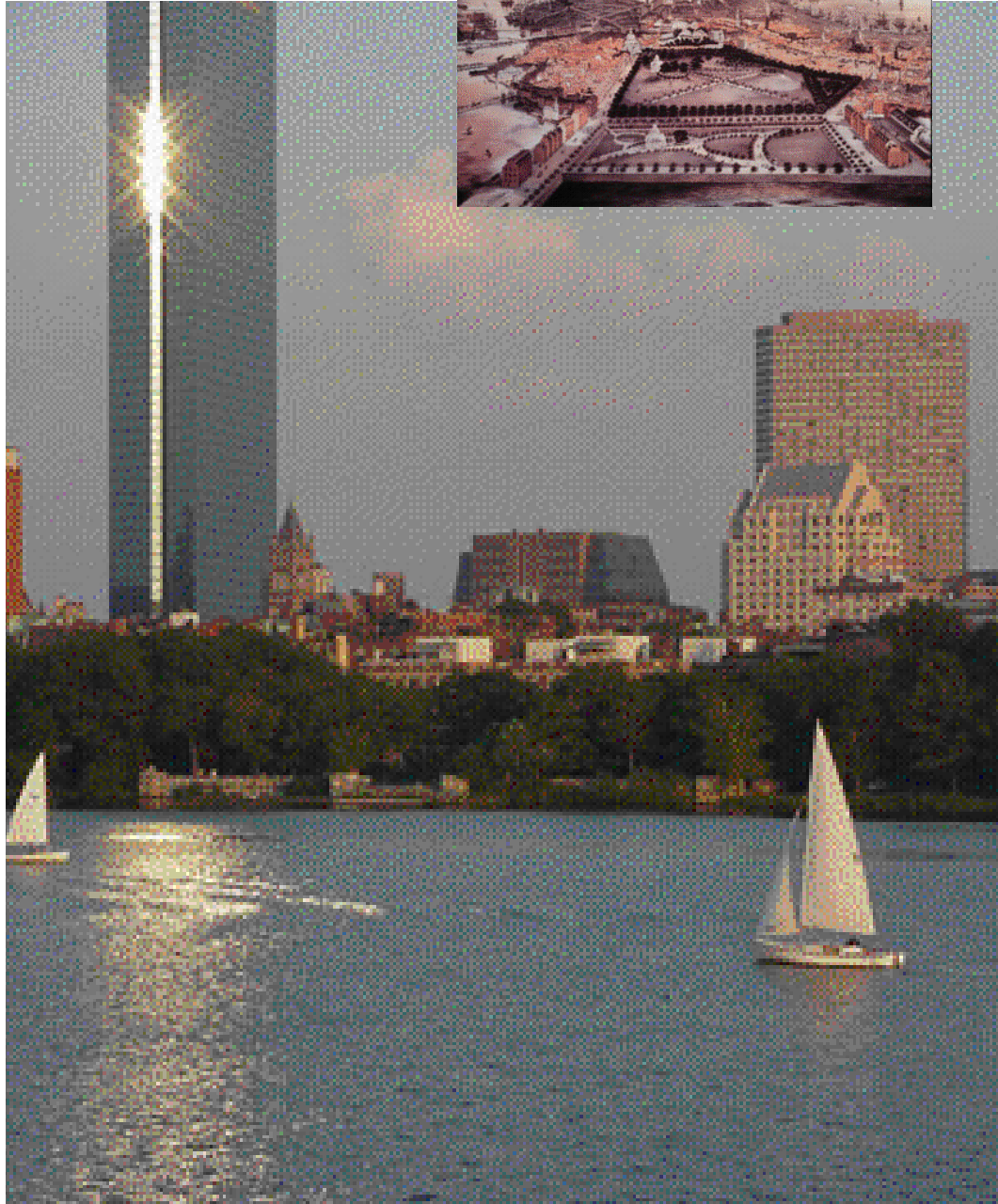
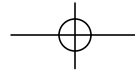
# BUILDING A BETTER BOSTON

AN OVERVIEW OF THE  
BOSTON  
REDEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY

THE CITY'S PLANNING  
AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT  
AGENCY







May 2003

Dear Friends,

The Boston Redevelopment Authority stands at the crossroads of the City of Boston's past, present, and future. We shape the city through planning and zoning and guide the evolution of business and urban growth through economic and workforce development.

Having these two integral functions, planning and economic development, housed under one roof makes Boston only one of a few cities in the country where a single agency is responsible for both envisioning and building the future. This unique combination ensures that Boston's growth is sensibly balanced, with equal focus on development, individual opportunity, and vision.

The BRA is committed to growth and prosperity for all the people of Boston. Working with residents, businesses, and community organizations, we look to build a Boston that continues to shine among the world's greatest cities.



Boston Redevelopment Authority



## BRA MISSION STATEMENT & VALUES

The role of the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) in the city of Boston is best illustrated in the agency's mission statement:

*In partnership with communities, the BRA plans Boston's future while respecting its past. We prepare our residents for new opportunities through training, human services and job creation. The BRA guides physical, social, and economic change in Boston's neighborhoods and its downtown to shape a more prosperous, comfortable, and beautiful city for all.*

The BRA operates with a set of shared beliefs about how we do what we do. These core values have become the basis for our organizational development. When making decisions and interacting with others, our values are the foundation on which we build programs and relate to the communities we serve.

**Dedication:** *Dedication to Boston and enhancing city life*

**Respect:** *Respect for individuals, neighborhoods, and communities*

**Diversity:** *Embrace diversity through differences in people, ideas, and skills*

**Integrity:** *Integrity of people and process*

**Professionalism:** *Commitment to professional excellence, learning, and accountability*

**Balance:** *Balance competing interests and concerns*

Our mission and our values place the residents of Boston at the very heart of our efforts. With this in mind, we are singularly focused on improving the quality of life for those who live in, work in, and visit our city.

From its inception, the BRA has aimed to meet the needs of the city's evolving economy by using the powers afforded the agency by the legislature to revitalize neighborhoods throughout the city.

In the new millennium, the BRA has evolved into a comprehensive planning and development agency.

## ENVISIONING BOSTON:

### Planning and Zoning

The Planning Division is comprised of five departments: City-wide Planning, Community Planning, Transportation and Infrastructure Planning, Urban Design, and Zoning. Working closely with residents, businesses, institutions, property owners, and others, this Division is charged with envisioning the ideal future of our city and determining the best ways to achieve it.

With public involvement at the heart of its processes, the BRA's Planning Division strives to determine what kind of physical foundation, public realm, services, and policies will best serve Boston's residents, economy, and institutions in the coming years.

#### *City-wide Planning*

In March 2001, the position of Chief Planner for the City of Boston was established as part of Mayor Menino's vision for more coordination among City agencies in planning and development. This new role, staffed within the BRA, provides a city-wide focus on land use, affordable housing, economic development and other issues that Boston's residents have highlighted as their most important planning concerns and aspirations. The Chief Planner is responsible for ensuring that these issues are addressed in a way that is open, inclusive, comprehensive, and characterized by long-term, "big-picture" thinking.

#### *Community Planning*

Working collaboratively with communities as well as other government agencies, the BRA's Community Planning department establishes long-range plans to enhance our quality of life. Planners seek to identify what works and doesn't work, what we would like to see preserved or improved, and how to best prepare for and leverage the changes that are introduced to our neighborhoods over time. Looking at such issues as land use, transportation, housing, the public realm, overall quality of life, and others, we ask, "What could this neighborhood be like in 50 years?" and "How can we achieve that goal?"

### *Transportation and Infrastructure Planning*

Access to our homes, work places, education, services and recreation is crucial to our daily lives and to our economy. The Transportation and Infrastructure Planning department works on both a micro and macro scale. It examines regional public transit, highway and freight systems as well as transit systems in the city's neighborhoods. It brings the many government transportation entities and Boston's residents together to address Boston's long-term needs for access and mobility within neighborhoods that are safe and environmentally sound.

#### *Urban Design*

The Urban Design Department produces urban design analysis and studies, computer simulation of development and planning scenarios, and conducts design review of projects of all sizes and uses in the downtown as well as Boston's neighborhoods. The department also coordinates the review of projects by the Boston Civic Design Commission, which provides a forum for the general public and professional design and real estate community to participate in the shaping of Boston's public realm. The Urban Design Department plans a key role in shaping the public image of the city.

#### *Zoning*

"What can you build - and where?" These are the questions that zoning regulations answer. The Boston Zoning Code stipulates what land uses, building types and sizes, heights and densities are appropriate on land throughout the city. In 1989 the BRA began a community-based process of rezoning the City neighborhoods, updating the Code that had been originally drafted in the 1950s and adopted in 1965.

Working with community-based planning and zoning advisory groups, the Boston Redevelopment Authority continues to recommend to the Zoning Commission updates to the Zoning Code to manage growth, and preserve and enhance the unique character of each neighborhood. This department is the liaison to and provides staff assistance for the Zoning Commission, and coordinates zoning activities in neighborhoods throughout the city, including coordination of the public review process, review of Zoning Board of Appeal applications, and referrals to the BRA Board.



## CREATING OPPORTUNITY:

### Economic Development

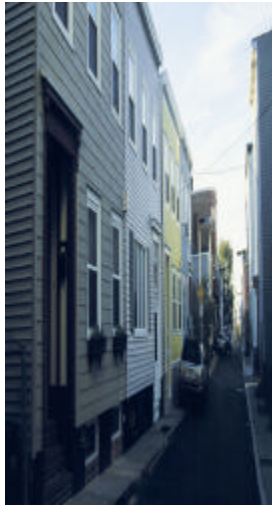
The BRA's role in the economic development of the city is comprehensive. We are dedicated to building the strongest economy possible for Boston.

The BRA's Economic Development Division guides the City's development review process and manages key services and incentives in support of Boston's growing economy. The Boston Zoning Code, under Article 80, requires the BRA to review the design of real estate developments and their effect on the surrounding community and the city as a whole. The success of the Article 80 process hinges on the participation of Boston residents, who are encouraged to offer their comments and insights throughout the many stages of development review. (For more detail, refer to a "Citizen's Guide to Development Review Under Article 80.")

Working in partnership with neighborhood residents, business owners, community-based organizations, and developers, the BRA employs an integrated approach to economic investment that addresses the current and future needs of the city across a range of issues, such as the creation of housing and the expansion of employment opportunities for residents.

### Housing & Community Development

The BRA has embraced a role in Mayor Menino's initiative to create more housing throughout the city. The BRA is dedicated to producing housing at all income levels. Recognizing housing's integral relationship to public health, safety, and welfare, the BRA is committed to creating affordable homeownership and rental opportunities. The BRA aims to alleviate the impacts of market rate housing on the supply and costs of housing for low and moderate income households.



### Back Streets Program

The Back Streets Program is an economic development initiative designed to focus resources on the small and mid-sized industrial and commercial businesses that operate in the city's back streets, yet play a central role in the city's economy. More than 4,000 Back Streets businesses are located within the city limits, providing more than 100,000 jobs, or about 20% of the total number of jobs in Boston. By ensuring that these businesses can grow and prosper here in Boston, the City is protecting the diverse employment opportunities these companies contribute to the local economy.



### Economic Sector Team Initiative

BRA personnel from all divisions of the agency work as teams to study the sectors of Boston's economy. The interdisciplinary structure of these teams maximizes the expertise of the respective team members in pursuit of the teams' goal: to develop a comprehensive, detailed, and up-to-date understanding of the different economic sectors, the companies that comprise them, and the business pressures and needs that are specific to them. Cumulatively, the work of the individual sector teams provides us with a thorough picture of Boston's overall business environment and economic assets. This enhanced understanding yields proactive policy measures that the BRA and the City can employ to more effectively foster the growth of the respective sectors and of the economy as a whole. (Sector Team FACT Sheets are available at [www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org](http://www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org).)

### *Economic Development and Industrial Corporation*

Once a separate agency, the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation of Boston (EDIC), is now merged with the BRA. This enhances the agency's ability to provide additional important tools and services to support the needs of entrepreneurs, industrial services, and workforce development.

#### **The Boston Local Development Corporation**

**(BLDC)** provides loans between \$15,000 and \$150,000 for businesses in or relocating to Boston. In addition, businesses that qualify as "Back Streets" businesses are eligible for the Back Streets Backup Loan Program, which provides favorable financing up to \$250,000. Designed to draw new businesses to Boston and to retain existing Boston businesses, these loans can be used to buy new business property, purchase equipment, provide working capital, expand, or finance leasehold improvements for an existing site. BLDC both provides stand-alone financing and works with Boston's banking community to provide gap financing through subordinated debt. Since 1995, BLDC has approved over \$4 million in loans to Boston businesses. These funds have leveraged more than \$11 million in bank financing and created or retained more than 1,000 jobs in the City of Boston.

Additionally, the BLDC offers a microloan program through the **Boston Small Business Fund (BSBF)**. The BSBF lends between \$5,000 and \$15,000 to start up or existing businesses in the City of Boston. With an eye on communities and the people of Boston, BSBF seeks borrowers who will benefit the city by creating jobs and by providing much-needed community services.



#### **The Boston Industrial Development Financing Authority**

**(BIDFA)** issues bonds that may be used to finance construction, acquisition and other capital expenditures resulting from expansion. There are a variety of tax-exempt and taxable bonds available. Due to the cost of issuance these bonds are usually over \$1 million. Since its inception, BIDFA has issued 111 bonds, generating \$437,000,000 in financing. Cumulatively, these bond issuances have allowed more than 6,000 jobs to be created and 11,600 jobs to be retained.

BRA / EDIC owned real estate, particularly the **Boston Marine Industrial Park (BMIP)** and the **Charlestown Navy Yard**, does much to meet the agency mission of economic development through job creation. Located on Boston's waterfront, **Boston Marine Industrial Park (BMIP)** is a 191-acre site purchased by the City of Boston in 1977 to create jobs and economic activity that enhance the City's economy and provide employment for City residents. The BRA owns and manages two working dry docks and 38 buildings containing 3.1 million square feet of building area. More

than 180 businesses are located within the Park, including, printers, fish processors, a brewery, ship repair, and the Boston Design Center.

The BRA, owner and operator of the **Charlestown Navy Yard**, has made the now-defunct defense facility a national model for successful military-to-civilian real estate conversions. Today, the site is home to a mixed-use development that includes housing as well as new bio-medical facilities operated by Massachusetts General Hospital and various private sector entrepreneurs.



## CULTIVATING A SKILLED WORKFORCE:

### Jobs & Community Services

With more than 90 employees and a budget of nearly \$35 million, the Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services (JCS), which functions as a division of the BRA, promotes economic self-sufficiency among Boston's neediest residents through more than 200 contracted programs focused on education, training, career development, youth and human services.

Funding for JCS programs comes from a number of sources, including the US Department of Labor, Federal Community Development Block Grants, and the state's Departments of Education and Transitional Assistance. JCS also works closely with the Boston Private Industry Council (PIC), whose Board provides oversight and makes decisions on JCS recommendations for US Department of Labor and welfare funds.



The Office of Jobs and Community Services is comprised of the following departments:

- Adult Training and Education Programs
- Youth and Human Services
- Planning and Policy
- Youth Opportunity Center
- ReadBoston
- WriteBoston
- Living Wage

In today's knowledge-based economy, a skilled workforce at all levels is critical to Boston's success. In addition to connecting Boston's residents with career opportunities, JCS plays an important role in cultivating the human capital that attracts and retains businesses in our city.

## GUIDING BRA POLICY:

### Policy Development & Research

The BRA's policies and guiding principles are informed by the efforts of the agency's Policy Development & Research Division (PDR). Their analysis of current, historical, and comparative data regarding Boston's economy, population and commercial markets is the basis on which the BRA formulates public policy and legislation related to planning, community and economic development.

PDR also serves as a resource for Boston residents, private sector groups, community-based organizations, and other governmental agencies. PDR is also the only source of 2000 Census data broken down by Boston neighborhood, an invaluable analysis used by community groups, non-profits, and other organizations. In 2002 alone, PDR published 30 reports based on the findings of the 2000 Census, including Insight Reports on poverty and household composition, Trends 2000 reports tracking demographic changes between over the decade, and profiles based on Boston's Planning Districts and Neighborhood Statistical Areas. (PDR research reports are available at [www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org](http://www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org).)

## SHAPING A MORE PROSPEROUS CITY

In the city of Boston, we are surrounded by change - that fast-paced evolution spurs transformations not just physical but social as well. This brochure offers just a snapshot of the BRA's wide-ranging resources, initiatives and efforts - work that is guided by a shared set of principles and priorities that help us navigate the ever-changing nature of Boston.



The BRA understands that economic development must be derived from a workforce perspective and that new development must benefit the community through job creation and housing development. Through BRA initiatives, programs, and policies we aim to foster continued growth in the City of Boston - to shape a more prosperous, comfortable, and beautiful city for all.